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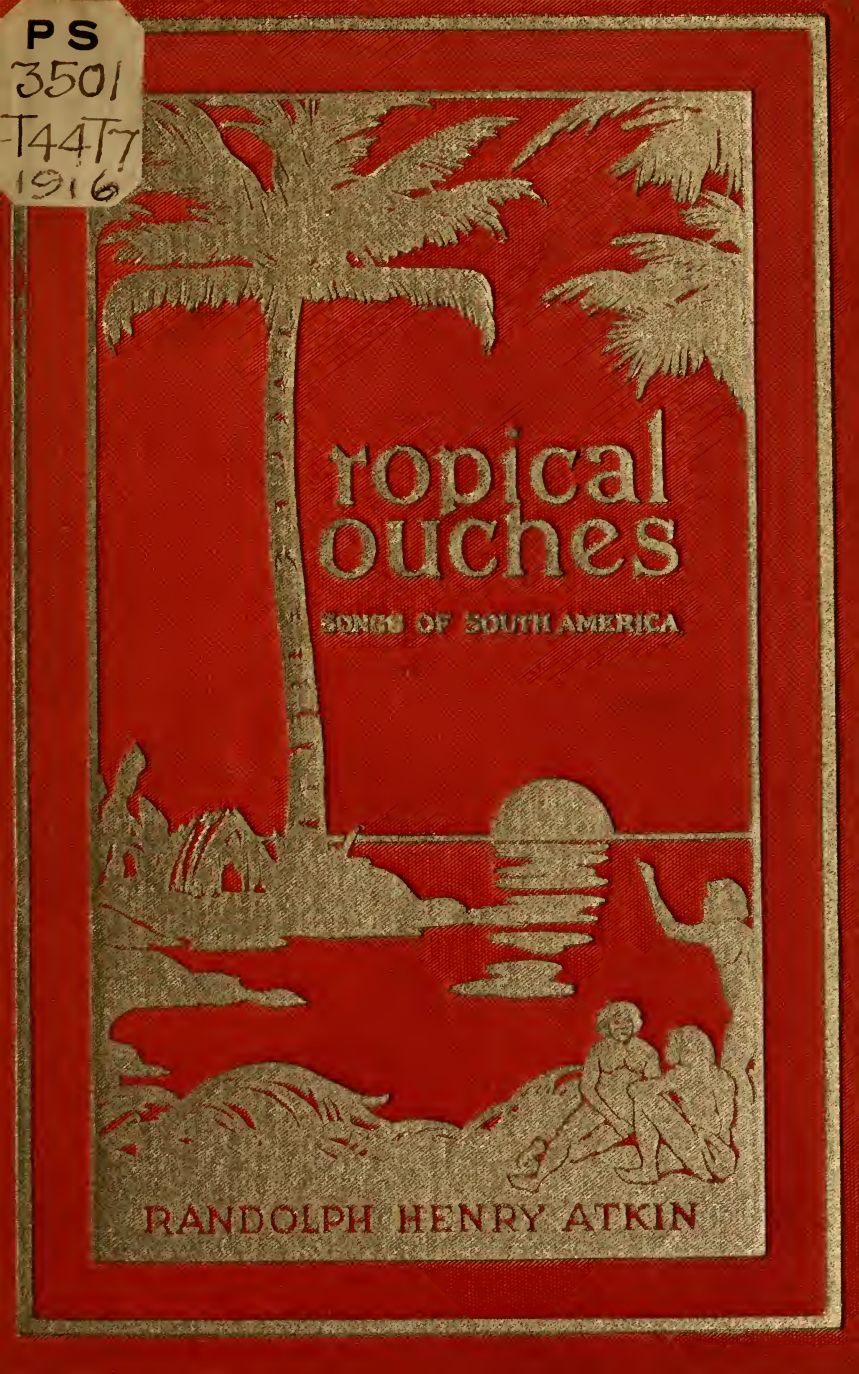

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Tropical Touches

Tropical Touches

(Songs from South America)

By

Randolph Henry Atkin

Author of

"Ballads of a Gringo", "Rio Grande"

and other Poems

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no. 1.

To my Gringo Friends
in South America

I've tried to write of matters
which I've pondered,
Of stories I've heard told—
of men I've met.
Of distant lands, where oft
I've lonely wandered
And scenes which I've beheld,
ne'er to forget.
I've tried to tell of living
as I've known it,
Nor do my rhymes abound
in polished speech,
Yet, for all *gringos,* though
they may not own it,
Past mem'ries they'll recall . . .
a lesson teach.
And should you o'er one word
of mine detain
Then has this work of love
been not in vain.

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SOUTH OF PANAMA.

Do you know those infant nations lying south
of Panama,
That dreary Coast of stretching scrub and sand,
Have you felt their lure upon you, breathed the
fever-ladened air,
Have you heard them call and tried to under-
stand?
Have you gripped the hand they proffer, do you
know the life they offer?
'Tis one in which with death you ever spar,
The blazing heat that blinds you, the something
that binds you
To those small republics south of Panama.

SOUTH OF PANAMA.

Do you know those yellow pampas undulating
to the skyline,
Where the king of desolation reigns supreme,
Have you heard the vultures croaking as you
staggered forward choking,
And watched with bloodshot eyes the mirage
gleam?
Have you fell to madly raving, chewed your belt
to ease your craving,
As you clear recalled that rippling brook afar.
And, though now you're back in clover, long
again to wander over
Those sun-baked countries south of Panama?

Do you know those dusty cities with their narrow crooked *calles,*[1]
Adobe houses dim as prison cells,
Those open market places thronged with black
perspiring faces,
The rotting fruit and reeking garlic smells?
Have you heard the *burro*[2] wailing, loud the
tropic morn assailing,
And clanging bells which on the senses jar,
Then known that hour redeeming, when at noonday all are dreaming
In those sunbathed countries south of Panama.

[1] Street
[2] Donkey

SOUTH OF PANAMA.

Do you know their lovely daughters, those stately senoritas,
Who with a perfect grace go gliding past,
And give you glances fleeting 'till your pulses fast are beating,
And at such beauty rare you stand aghast?
Have you heard that rippling laughter? Seen beneath a fringed mantilla
Two flashing eyes which pale the brightest star?
Do you feel a lover's yearning, do your thoughts keep oft returning
To those sunkissed countries south of Panama?

Have you seen those tropic 'evens when the heated earth's aglowing
And clouds are lined with tints of ev'ry hue?
When the sun, its blood pulsating, lingers not o'er its leavetaking,
But soon 'neath old Pacific drops from view.
Then the luna, newly risen, palefaced, from her daily prison,
Looks down from off the tow'ring peaks afar,
And brings some relaxation to the gasping population,
Of those sun-scorched countries south of Panama.

SOUTH OF PANAMA.

Have you known those nights of splendour when
ten thousand stars are sparkling
Like fireflies in the blackness overhead,
Watched the wavelets inland creeping, and the
flames of phosphor leaping
Where th' changeful sea with steadfast shore
is wed?
Have you . . . turned to silent wonder . . . seen
the Southern Cross appearing
A pendant bright beyond the harbour bar?
And, through dangers dire to steer you, some-
how felt that God was near you
In those sunsteeped countries south of Panama.

I have roamed their rugged seaboards, ridden
o'er their barren pampas,
I have trod their city byeways, drenched in
sweat,
To the puma's scream I've wakened, by their
deadly fevers shakened,
To each of their demands I've paid my debt.
But though Fortune's tide has borne me from
that land of stern adventure
To a country where the joys of comfort are,
And where life is of the choicest . . . yet I hear
the luring voices.
Of those distant countries south of Panama.

THE SOUTHERN TYPHOON.

Born in the depths of darkness, in the long Antarctic night,
Reared in the mighty cradle of a vastness virgin white,
Piercing the clouds that bound me at the dawn of a long sought day,
Sallying forth with pent up wrath to speed on my frenzied way.

THE SOUTHERN TYPHOON.

Driving the snows before me over the barren plain,
Heaving them high to the glowering sky to be dashed to the earth again,
Stifling the lone explorer with a blast of my chilly breath,
Hurling the ice-bound whaler to the jaws of a waiting death.

Faster and ever faster 'till the towering mountains quake,
Stronger and ever stronger 'till the rising plateaux shake,
Nothing but desolation as far as the eye can see,
With a deaf'ning roar I leave the shore to spread o'er the cringing sea.

THE SOUTHERN TYPHOON.

Lashing its breast in my fury 'till it shrinks from
my tireless hand,
And runs for the rugged shelter of the far-off
watching land,
Flies like a timid maiden from the grip of a
fancied ghost,
To tear itself asunder on the stern unyielding
coast.

With a joyous cry I soon espy, away on the sky-
line dim,
The graceful form of a speeding barque . . .
toy for my present whim,
Hearing my shout triumphant, inspired by the
proffered sport,
She swiftly turns, as a startled deer, and makes
for the nearest port.

One rush and I overtake her, she shrinks with a dull alarm,
Then heels as I dash her from me with a sweep of my mighty arm,
Again, and I clutch her to me, I can hear her long-drawn gasp,
And her strong ribs loudly crunching 'neath the power of my iron grasp.

Those puny human mortals, who Nature's anger brave,
Now cry to their God to snatch them from the brink of a wat'ry grave,
But I rip the decks asunder with a final shatt'ring blow,
And they sink with the ship they trusted to the claws of the crabs below.

THE SOUTHERN TYPHOON.

Onward I speed 'till the Andes rear up each hoary
head,
Clear to that space unending where only the
angels tread,
From the crest of their glitt'ring snowfields a
challenge to all is hurled,
For never have they been conquered, those
Kings of the Western World.

Dashing myself against them I tear at their ram-
parts old,
They answer my youthful howlings with the
calm of an age untold,
Stemmed are my furious onslaughts by the
strength of their bosoms vast,
On those snowbound plains, where the condor
reigns, I meet with defeat at last.

THE SOUTHERN TYPHOON.

Thrown from that rocky stronghold I drop to the earth below,
To skim o'er the green clad valleys where westbound rivers flow,
Gone is the lust for battle, the strength of my youth is spent
Till scarcely the supple bambu by the force of my blow is bent.

I suck the dew from the pastures new, on my lips it is borne away,
To kiss the flower at the noonday hour, as it droops 'neath the glare of day,
To stir the leaves of the listless trees till they nod to the setting sun,
And bring relief to the gasping earth 'ere the reign of the moon's begun.

THE SOUTHERN TYPHOON.

On through the night I travel, over the moonlit land,
Crossing the silent pampa, ruffiing its glist'ning sand,
Stirring the lonely campfire till I see by its ruddy glow
Fresh hope arise in the lost one's eyes as he harks to my whimperings low.

For a moment brief he sits and stares . . . out through the rising smoke,
His thirst's forgot and he listens not to the waiting vultures' croak,
For he sees again a dew-drenched plain, and hears the swishing mill,
And his haggard face for the briefest space, with joy those visions fill.

But 'ere the breath of another wind can soothe
his fevered head,
His spirit bold will seek the fold of the count-
less unknown dead,
While, served by him, the vultures grim their
proffered feast will gain
And his bones will lie 'neath a blazing sky, a
speck on the stretching plain.

Over the festooned jungle I speed on my north-
ern way,
Waking the chatt'ring monkey as the roof of
his home I sway,
Rousing the shrieking puma to be joined by a
thousand more,
Then all is stilled as the air is filled with a
hungry tiger's roar.

THE SOUTHERN TYPHOON.

Quickly the dawn of a tropic morn breaks in the
garnished East,
Hid from the glare in his fetid lair slumbers
the prowling beast,
The note is heard of an early bird, the deep green
foliage shakes,
With the rustling sound of a mighty bound the
trembling jungle wakes.

Upwards, now mounting upwards till I see from
a mountain crest,
The first bright ray of the piping day bathing
Caribbean's breast,
The morning star, in its realm afar, melts in the
burning light,
And the yawning West, as it springs from rest,
swallows the conquered night.

Then the fairy touch of a gentle breeze ripples
the placid sea,
And the cadent trill of a gladsome song floats
through the air to me,
At that welcome sound, with a fleeting bound,
from the mountain top I glide,
For over the sand of that circling strand frolics
my northern bride.

One fond embrace, then off we race, out from the
tranquil bay,
Which brightly gleams as the amber beams
over its bosom play
Back one more to the fretful shore we come from
our joyous flight,
To sing a tune to the locked lagoon, ablaze in
the shimmering light.

But my heart's on fire with a great desire, and I
long of that fruit to taste,
Which ripens best in the perfumed breast,
snow-white of a maiden chaste.
I long to fly from the watching eye, far up from
the land and sea,
Till hid from view by that veil of blue, through
which Death alone can see.

So I take my bride in my eager arms, she yields
with a trembling sigh,
To the hills and plains of the smiling earth I
whisper a last Goodbye,
Then up I soar through a mighty door, which
opes in the clouds above,
To a bridal home in the sapphire dome, alone
with my virgin love.

THE GRINGO.

You'll encounter a type in your wanderings far,
From storm-swept Magellan to old Panama,
His hide is like leather, his soul black as tar,
And in Spanish they call him a gringo.

He's grim of the face, yet he's soft of the heart,
From the store of adventure full claiming his part,
There isn't a speck on the southern chart
Untrod by the foot of a gringo.

His morals are not what you'd find in a saint,
His knowledge of Scripture's decidedly faint,
But of fear and of lying he bears not a taint,
And he'll stick to his friends, will the gringo.

THE GRINGO.

He's fond of the ladies—got sweethearts galore,
By difference in color he places no store,
But never forgets 'twas a woman who bore,
That man now matured to a gringo.

Being thick of the skin you may poison the air,
And call him a son of—whate'er you may care,
But *smile when you say it,* or if not—beware!
He reckons life cheap does the gringo.

His manners are rough, he's a beggar to drink,
And down to the depths of the wretched may sink,
But, from one act of meanness to others he'd shrink,
He's true to the core is the gringo.

THE GRINGO.

High up on the peaks where the earth stretches
white,
Far down on the plains, where the sweat blinds
your sight,
Wherever mankind with stern Nature must fight,
You'll find the opponent a gringo.

When the darkest of jungles is cleared from the
ground,
And the highest of mountains eventually
crowned,
'Neath the oozing black slime, or the snows will
be found
The bones of a wandering gringo.

He carries his flag to the ends of the earth,
He's building up fame for the land of his birth,
So those who sit snugly at home by the hearth,
Just take off your hats to the gringo!

THE REVENGE.

'Twas told to me by the camp firelight,
Where the ruddy glow is shed,
In that silent hour of the tropic night,
E'er the blackness fades o'erhead,
And the sweltering dawn, with a gaping yawn,
Springs up from its jungle bed.

There are towns I've known, from the Frozen
Zone to the rims where the palm trees wave
Some as gay as the Great White Way, or sad as
a pauper's grave.
From Behring Sound, where the palefaced ground
lies tight in the frost-fiend's hold.
To Chili's strand, where the burning sand, rolls
back like a sea of gold.
But the strangest spot that it's been my lot to
strike in my wanderings far,
Is one which lies 'neath southern skies . . . that
wide-famed Panama.

THE REVENGE.

'Twas back in the days when the worldly gaze
was fixed on that distant place,
Men drifted there from God knows where, each
of a different race.
White and black, yellow and brown, Gentile,
Hindu, Jew.
Cast aside by the human tide . . . a jostling,
motley crew.
Men of worth, of grit and birth, honest and brave
and free,
Mixed with the scum of the sodden slum . . .
fruit for the gallows tree.

Then, after the men, in a mighty drove, flocking
the women came.
To share the fate of their chosen mate, or follow
the road of shame.
Labour was dear and life was cheap, parched by
the fever's breath,
Men staked their all on the dice's fall, and
laughed at the call of death.
'Twas there 'neath the blaze of a blistering sun,
each *gringo* raised a thirst,
And, gone the day, in a *joint* cafe gambled and
drank and cursed.

THE REVENGE.

The only law that we ever knew was that of the gun and knife.
An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, the ancient rules of life.
A smashing blow or a flash of steel as the insult deeply stung,
No man had time, in that deadly clime, for a long warfare of tongue.
No issues left to the phrasing deft of a claptrap in your pay,
But honour won and justice done in a swift, sure, manly way.

* * * * *

From out of that seeting flotsam there rose in his giant might
A leader strong, despising wrong, defender of the right.
Shoulders broad and tall of limb, lithe as a puma wild,
Clear of mind, a will of steel, and the heart of a simple child.
His joy and pride was a tender bride, famed for her beauty rare,
Whose body frail, from life's fierce gale, he screened with a wondrous care.

Now silent Dick was the name he bore, for timid
was he of speech,
But his deeds did show what he'd have you
know, his life what he wished to teach.
The bully cringed and the braggart ceased if he
hap'd to be passing by,
As his voiced was heard the shirker stirred, and
the liar ate his lie.
Yet the 'down-and-outs' would to him relate sad
tales of their black disgrace,
And he'd help them climb from the oozing slime
to a place in the worldly race.

* * * * *

We were seated one night in the lampglare
bright of an uptown cabaret.
Where the *gringos* came with their throats
aflame at the end of the swelt'ring day.
Maisie, the one of the painted face, was singing
a ragtime song,
While the thirsty crew, as they mellowed up,
were shouting the chorus strong.
When into the light, from the blackened night,
out of the swishing rain,
Staggering wild, came Silent Dick . . . with the
air of a man insane.

THE REVENGE.

Have you watched the eyes of a raving fool as
he sits in his padded room?
The blanching cheek of a man condemned as the
stern judge seals his doom?
The quivering lips on that last lone night as he
sits in his prison cell,
The anguished look of a strong-willed man,
suff'ring the pangs of hell?
That was the face of Silent Dick . . . fell a
silence deep as death,
Not a reveller stirred, whilst we clearly heard
the hiss of each indrawn breath.

Then the silence broke, for up Dick spoke . . .
his voice bore the mournful knell,
Of a spirit cast from the sunlit vast to the dark-
est pit of hell,
Of one who wakes from a blissful dream to find
his illusions flown,
Drifting apart, with an aching heart . . . facing
the world alone.
Of one, who falls from the peak of fame, to sink
in the filth and mud,
Robbed of all that he cherished most—home, and
the girl he loved.

For among the list of those 'down-and-outs' was
one of a swinish breed,
Whom Dick did raise from mis'ry's ways in the
direst hour of need,
Polished of speech, with a tongue of silk, fair as
an ancient Greek,
One of a kind you oft' will find, spoiler of women
weak.
Slimiest snake of a poisonous brood, seeking that
built bower,
To gain lust's end, betrayed his friend, in a short
unguarded hour.

* * * * *

The jungle dense lay deathly tense in the grip
of the noonday glare.
The prowling brute, tired of pursuit, snored loud
in its fetid lair.
From rolling plain to the jagged peak, where the
condor reigns supreme,
Through th' swelt'ring day all Nature lay in a
long unbroken dream.
When out of the shade, by the forest made,
where lingers twilight's veil,
Stumbled a weary, trail-stained pair,—a man and
a woman frail.

They glanced around as a threat'ning sound came
out from the thicket gloom,
(Into their eyes did the look arise of those who
await their doom)
The tangled shrub was brushed aside, and into
the sunlit space,
Staggered a wild-eyed, bush-torn man, haggard
and scarred of face.
A moment's pause—then the jungle hush with
the yell of a madman rang,
And, swift as a beast to the bloody feast, at the
woman's throat he sprang,

His calloused hands like wrought steel bands
around her neck did close,
A strangled cry, with terror filled, from her
blanchéd lips arose;
One snake-like twist of his gnarléd wrist . . .
a woman's piercing shriek,
And, paid sin's toll, her tainted soul the realms of
the dead did seek,
Then, as a beast which is roused to slay, he
turned with an angry roar,
And soon with ease, down to his knees, the
woman's lover bore.

Drawing a rope from beneath his coat the struggling man he bound,
Laughing aloud, as his rival cowed, whined like a beaten hound.
Then, dragging him back to the nearby spot, where the corpse of the woman lay,
He lashed him close, with a hempen cord, to the breast of the lifeless clay.
Scorning the cries of the wretched man, roped to the staring dead,
With a fiendish laugh at his hellish work, into the bush he fled.

* * * * *

A year ago, as I chance to know, a wandering gringo found,
Somewhere back on a lonely track, where solitudes abound,
A mouldering heap of bleached remains, and plain to his startled gaze,
Circling the bones was a hempen cord, rotting away with age.
But every trace of their sex or state had fast, long since decayed,
Whilst, in and out of the grinning skulls, the green backed lizards played.

And, crouched that night by his camp firelight, where shadows come and go,
And faces dear so oft appear in the heart of the ruddy glow,
He plainly heard, (and I take his word) a woman's piercing cry,
A struggle keen . . . then the pleading tones of a man who is doomed to die,
A taunting laugh . . . a stillness strange . . . a long blood-curdling yell,
Then—silence deep, like a world asleep, on the shuddering jungle fell.

ADIOS . . . MI AMOR.

The last lone ray of the swelt'ring day
Retires from the gasping land,
The paintings rare in the clouds above,
Are veiled by a stealthy hand.
From over the sea the dipping sun,
Smiles back to the weeping shore,
Then sinks from view with a last adieu:
Adiós . . . adiós . . . mi amor!

'Tis then I sit by that 'circling beach,
Alone with those mem'ries old,
Where the fleeting love which you felt for me,
On that fateful eve was told.
I hear again with returning pain,
Those words which you spoke of yore,
That trembling sigh, and that last good-bye,
Adiós . . . adiós . . . mi amor!

ADIOS . . . MI AMOR.

On . . . on I dream till a snow-white beam
  Shines down through the gathering night,
And the still lagoon, by the nascent moon,
  Is bathed with a silver light.
Then it seems to me that the restless sea,
  As it shrinks from the weeping shore,
Is whisp'ring low, in a voice I know
    Adiós . . . adiós . . . mi amor!

Yet the setting sun will appear again
  To smile on the joyful land,
And the ebbing sea will return to kiss
  The face of the virgin sand.
But my Ideal, like the trampled flow'r,
  Will rise from the dust no more,
The past is dead . . . all hope has fled . . .
    Adiós . . . adiós . . . mi amor!

As the lonely tree on the barren plain
  But heightens the dreariness,
And the passing bird o'er the ocean's breast
  But deepens the loneliness;
So the mem'ry clear of our love-dream, dear,
  Adds to Disillusion's store.
Ah! to forget that we ever met!
    Adiós . . . adiós . . . mi amor!

ADIOS . . . MI AMOR.

Soon fleeting years with ruthless hands
  Will turn these hairs to white,
Life's dreary day will pass away,
  And swift will fall the night;
Till, bending low, with falt'ring steps
  I'll enter Death's dark door,
And, sorrow past, find Truth at last:
    Adiós . . . adiós . . . mi amor!

THE COAST.

Stretching due south the Equator
  Swept by a mountainous swell,
Mixture of pampa and jungle,
  Where gringos and centipedes dwell,
Cursed by all manner of fevers,
  Hotter and dried than Hell
    Is the Coast.

Seaports where life is a burden
  Menaced by typhoid and stinks,
Home of the 'down-and-the-outer',
  Of bleary beach-combers and 'ginks',
Where the only diversions for gringos
  Are loving, and gambling and drinks
    On the Coast.

THE COAST.

Streets that are narrow and winding,
  Filled with a garlicky smell,
Houses of 'dobe and mortar,
  Windows barred up like a cell.
Eyes which are flashing behind them,
  Helping to strengthen the spell
    Of the Coast.

Days when the mercury rises
  To ninety and nine in the shade,
Ev'nings when landscape and ocean,
  In crimson and gold are arrayed.
Nights when the heavenly ceiling
  With glittering stardust's inlaid
    On the Coast.

Deserts which stretch to the skyline,
  Where glimmering mirages glow,
Mountains which rise to the vastness
  Crowned with a halo of snow,
Rivers abounding in reptiles,
  Meandering sluggish and slow
    To the Coast.

THE COAST.

Mosquitos that threaten to eat you,
  Flies which you slay with delight,
Sandcrabs which come out to greet you,
  Dogs that attack you on sight,
Burros that wake you at dawning,
  Fleas which disturb you at night
    On the Coast.

Paths that are rearing like stairways
  Up to God's heavenly gates,
Or winding through death-laden jungles,
  To haunts where the rattler awaits,
O'er pampa and prairie, where exiles
  Are sharing the direst of fates
    On the Coast.

Only a year since I left it
  When deeply and grimly I swore
That never again would I venture
  To live on that sweltering shore,
But somehow there's *something* that calls me,
  So back I am going once more
    To the Coast.

ADVICE.

'Tis a cold hard world as you've all found out,
You stand on your feet to be knocked about,
And get darn all if you start to shout,
But the jeers of the jostling throng.
Yet there are times in this ruthless fight,
(Though most of us think that Might is Right)
When the bitterest man finds some delight
In helping another along.

There are different ways of helping one,
There's the rich, who think it's the greatest fun,
And visit the poor of a sodden slum
In a stylish motor car,
Who head the list of a charity ball,
And from the housetops loudly call,
That the wondrous fact may be known by all
What generous folk they are.

Yet I wouldn't give two hurrahs in hell
For those who *must* of their helping tell,
Who on the acts of their kindness dwell
Expecting a neighbour's praise.
But give me the one who will share his crust
With a fellow-man who is badly 'bust,'
And from the slime and the choking dust
His fallen brother raise.

And not a whisper of what he's done,
Trying the thanks of the world to shun,
Treating it all as a game he's won
Where his partner shares the gain.
That is a man whom you'd call a friend,
Who'd stick by you to the bitter end,
The Wrong oppose and the Right defend,
The cause of the weak maintain.

* * * * *

Now women there are (and I've known a lot)
Who judge man's worth by the purse he's got,
But, down and out, he is soon forgot
And placed in the 'has been' fold.
Give me the girl whose heart is true,
Whose side you seek when things turn blue,
And, come what may, sticks fast by you,
She's worth her weight in gold.

ADVICE.

A worthy prize in the game of life,
A jewel rare where shams are rife,
The kind, my boy, to be one's wife,
To mother a future home.
The others are pastes of the cheapest make,
They sparkle awhile, yet prove a fake,
With hearts as cold as a falling flake,
The good wine's tasteless foam.

Never you judge by outward show,
The rarest flowers well sheltered grow,
So look for the beauty that's hid below,
The mind of a woman scan.
Don't place a man by his wealth or birth,
But value each as each one is worth,
Remember the noblest thing on earth
Is an upright, clean-cut man!

A WANDERER'S DAY.

I wake at dawn and stir the dying embers,
To cook the contents of my old canteen,
Rough, hardened fare—how keenly one remembers,
Those bye-gone days, and thinks *what might have been.*
Recalling scenes where shady pathways winded,
Of meadows green where rippling brooklets run,
And—here I am, by perspiration blinded,
Plodding along beneath a blistering sun.

A mid-day halt, in thicket gloom reposing
Where sunbeams chase each other to and fro,
Contented, musing half, and half adozing,
I listen to the bellbird chiming low.
Then falls a silence, stagnant and oppressive,
When nothing stirs, from plain to distant peak,
A stillness strange, as coming death impressive,
Until it seems that God must surely speak.

A WANDERER'S DAY.

I watch the sun go down in wondrous splendour,
As cooling winds disperse the swelt'ring heat,
And then the moon appears, so soft and tender,
A crescent pale, beneath Madonna's feet
The clustering stars from daydreams now awaken
To gleam in teeming millions overhead,
Whilst down below the forest depths are shaken
By prowling beasts, which fill the night with dread.

By jungle track, where stealthy forms are creeping,
When cold the air of tropic night has grown,
I build my fire, whilst all the world's asleeping,
And crouch beside it, weary and alone.
The curling smoke, up to the night ascending,
Shapes, to my gaze, a form divinely fair,
Then, flippant ever, with the darkness blending,
Leaves me to wakened sorrow and despair.

A WANDERER'S DAY.

A wanderer's day, far from the city faring,
Far from the haunts of luxury and ease,
Toiling beneath a sun forever glaring,
Meeting alone dire dangers and disease.
No thought of gain, no bid for admiration,
As those who strive the heights of fame to scale,
Only a fight 'gainst sickness, thirst, starvation,
Only a grave beside a lonely trail.

HAVE YOU?

Have you ridd'n cross a pampa, knowing nought
of limitations,
Alone with Nature in its wildest state,
And the silence was so awful you could hear the
earth's pulsations,
And your soul, unfettered, calling to its mate?
Have you stood upon a montain, when the land
and sea around you
Seemed bounded only by Eternity,
Letting nought of care enslave you . . . living
on what Nature gave you?
If you have . . . then you may speak of Liberty.

HAVE YOU?

Have you mushed across a snowfield where the
Arctic blizzard pounds you,
All silent save the north wind shrieking o'er,
Or broke trail in the Tropics, where the jungle
dense surrounds you,
And you're woke from slumbers by the tiger's
roar?
Have you shared your rice and *pollo*[1] with a
save Indian *cholo*[2]
Yet feasted with the aristocracy,
Brought deep passion's glow to faces . . . daughters fair of diff'rent races?
If you have . . . then you have tasted Life
with me.

Have you fought a fight unaided . . . a war with
fever waging,
When comrades died like flies 'fore winter's
blast,
Or tossed upon the ocean 'neath a southern
typhoon raging,
And though each shuddering plunge to be the
last?
Have you felt your bowels sicken, and your
parched throat quickly thicken,
When sand stretched out as far as eye could
see,
Have you cursed a maddened cheater . . . famed
as quick with his repeater?
If you have . . . then you have courted Death
with me.

[1] Chicken
[2] Indian of the mountains

HAVE YOU?

Have you known a girl you cared for, fully
trusted, wholly revered,
The knowledge of whose virtues made you
glad,
Then had your ideals shattered, your illusions
widely scattered
By the action of a low down selfish cad?
Have you spent your days in scheming, and your
nights in fondly dreaming
Of a future based on true fidelity,
Then seen your mind's creation sink to depths of
degradation?
If you have . . . then you have shared a grief
with me.

Have you started madly drinking to prevent
yourself from thinking
And never for a year drawn sober breath,
Quickly drifting on the ebb-tide with the scum of
ev'ry nation
To the borders of a low degraded death?
Have you sunk past all forgiving . . . 'till you
stooped to earn your living
As 'bully' in a den of infamy,
With mem'ries old to haunt you . . . ambitions
lost to taunt you?
If you have . . . then you have passed through
hell with me.

HAVE YOU?

Have you sat beside your camp-fire, list'ning to a
puma crying,
Through the blackness of a startled tropic
night,
And pictured scenes familiar in the embers
quickly dying,
Which brought betraying dimness to your
sight?
Have you rolled up in your blanket, sorely aching
cold and hungry,
With naught betwixt your couch and heaven's
dome,
Have you lain for months unending, sick, with
strangers to you tending?
If you have . . . then you have learnt to value
Home.

Have you had your little homestead nestling in
a fertile valley,
Where the winds of frenzied Nature never
blow,
And seen the sated cattle come lowing to the
barnyard
Through the meadows where the orange blos-
soms grow?
Have you heard the bellbird chiming, and
watched bright Saturn climbing
O'er the distant palms when sweltering day
has flown,

Then thought with fervent pity of tired dwellers
in the city?
If you have . . . then sweet contentment you
have known.

Have you stood beneath a mango, while the early
breezes straying,
Sang to the rising sun a welcoming tune,
Or watched the flittering fireflies 'neath the
spreading branches playing,
And heard the puma heralding the moon?
Have you lived with your *cholita*[3] in a rudely
built *casita*[4]?
The walls of bambu and the floor of mud,
And, though now you own a mansion, still you
crave for more expansion,
Then the Tropic Lure has entered in your
blood.

[3] Indian girl
[4] Hut

THE OUTCAST.

Only a city Outcast,
One of the world's forlorn.
Subject for men's diversion,
Object of women's scorn.
One of the recent fallen,
Limp in the strongholds of vice,
Deep in the mire . . . a creature for hire,
Offered to all at a price.

Sport for the brute and the drunkard,
Slave of exploiters of sin.
Outwardly gay . . . unrepentent,
Numbed by the mis'ry within.
Warmed by the glow of the moment,
Chilled by the fate of her kind,
Youthfulness flown . . . forsaken . . . alone,
Shrivelled in body and mind.

Yet there's the joy of a mother
  Mixed with her anguish and cares,
Tight to her sin ladened bosom
  One of her sinew she bears.
A wond'ring-eyed, innocent infant,
  Heir to a birthright of shame,
Yet, by God it was sent; if you choose to dissent,
  Then tell me from whither it came!

She knows the love of a mother,
  Child, though it is, of disgrace;
Yea! and the look of Madonna
  Gleams through the rouge on her face.
Yet, she is only an outcast,
  Doomed in her mis'ry to dwell.
I fervently trust that God will be just,
  And send her betrayers to hell!

Always the sin of a woman
  Follows her whither she goes;
Man can efface his wrongdoings
  With the ease of a changing of clothes,
Then seek, as his due, for a virgin
  His home of the future to share,
Whilst his love of the past in the gutter is cast,
  Unheeded her shriek of despair.

THE OUTCAST.

Listen! fond mothers and sweethearts,
Harken! ye wives who are true,
Those, whom you look to for guidance,
  Those, who seem stainless to you,
Have drunk of the money-bought nectar,
  Have sated themselves to the eyes;
Yes: their *wild oats* they've sown, and the harvest that's grown,
  Are those outcasts you fiercely despise.

PRICKLY HEAT.

Down South'rn on the swelt'ring Tropic Zone,
Where day and night one's body steeped in sweat,
There's a torture to which *gringoes* all are prone,
And, having it, the others they forget.

'Tis neither vile Bubonic,
Yellow Fever, nor the Vomit
It's got those dread diseases fairly beat,
For the torture past comparing
To which now I am referring,
Is what we gringoes call the Prickly Heat.

PRICKLY HEAT.

It begins with ruddy pimples—just a few,
But rapidly it spreads and forms a patch,
While its lightning growth amazes, it is hurting you like blazes,
And it's' always in a place you cannot scratch.

'Neath the tropic sunglare burning,
Through the dark night restless turning,
You claw your body o'er from head to feet,
Tortures vile, of man's creation,
Rack and gibbet, thirst, starvation,
Are nothing when compared with Prickly Heat.

And a victim can be seen at every turn,
You will know him by the twitchings of his face,
Meeting one of self-same feather, they will sit for hours together,
And scratch with fiendish glee the other's place.

It has no respect of person,
But alights on Nature's cov'ring,
Be he millionaire, or beggar in the street,
Rich and poor alike are twitching,
With the tantalizing itching,
Of that peace-destroying curse—the Prickly Heat.

PRICKLY HEAT.

When we *gringoes* on our last long journey go,
And bid farewell to this ungodly Coast,
Our dusky host, who runs the torture show,
Won't put us on a blazing fire to roast.

Such a false hope may be scooted
For old Nick will do his duty,
And choose the punishment our sins to meet,
So we all will be presented,
Till each one has sore relented,
With a rattling, rousing dose of Prickly
Heat.

MY IDEAL.

'Tis in my dreams I see my ideal's face,
Yet, when I wake, it fades quick into space,
When all alone her voice my ear doth greet,
Whispering to me, in accents low and sweet.
I see her in the firelight's ruddy glare,
Her form the flitt'ring shadows—the glow her hair,
And when the light grows dim she draweth nigh,
Until it seems to me I hear her sigh.
Then faint I feel her warm breath fan my cheek,
I wait with beating heart to hear her speak,
From out the gloom comes that sweet voice so dear,
Bidding me be patient, bidding me to cheer,
For soon materialized she'll come to me,
Realized my dreams, contented then I'll be.

But this ideal thou'lt tell me is in vain,
'Tis but a vision of the heated brain,
But thou are wrong, for here will I define
The great ideal I seek, for which I pine.
'Tis but a woman pure, a snow white flower
Possessing only this has in her power
To make my life a heav'n, and in return I'd give
All in this world, for her alone I'd live.
One, whom no other man her lips had pressed,
One, whom no man had held close to his breast,
For then I'd know that the fond look of love
Lighting her eyes, bright as the stars above,
Was mine and mine alone, no other one
Had shared the priceless love, which I had won.

I know not if I'll meet her on this earth,
I sometimes doubt if woman has given her birth.
Still—though I doubt— sweet hope with me doth
stay,
Consoling my lone heart by night and day,
Oh, come my love, my Ideal come to me!
Thou'lt find love pure and true awaiting thee.

PANAMA.

(With apologies to the singer of Mandalay.)

I'm tired of endless avenues, I'm sick of countless streets.
Where wand'ring round from morn till night a friend one never meets.
The hustle, noise and bustle on my fevered senses jar,
Oh send me where no subways run, nor elevators are.
Down in swelt'ring Panama.
Where the exiled gringos are,
And temptations are so plentiful
they make a man or mar.
Down in dreamy Panama,
'Neath the equatorial star
Where, gleaming bright, hangs low at night,
the Southern Cross afar.

PANAMA.

There's a girl I'm mighty fond of, and her skin's
a dusky hue,
Yet she knows what's right and proper just
the same as me or you,
Though her colour's not admitted into high so-
ciety,
Yet she'd shame her whiter sisters with her
true fidelity.
With a true fidelity
She is waiting there for me,
Looking out upon the bosom,
of that old Pacific sea!
Down in swelt'ring Panama . . .

When the blood-red sun was dipping down be-
yond Taboga Bay,
Along that stand of coral hand in hand we
used to stray!
And we'd linger till the shadows of the tropic
ev'en fell
A-list'ning to the chiming of that old Cathedral
bell.
List'ning to the distant bell,
And the sucking, surging swell,
When she'd nestle closer to me
and her love for me she'd tell.
Down in swelt'ring Panama . . . .

Then the stars would start to twinkle in the velvet dome of night,
And the silent harbour sparkle in the moon's argental light,
While the inky tropic blackness with the glowing worm would team,
Until I thought I'd sure awake and find it all a dream.
Yes, it surely did but seem,
Just to be a passing dream,
With the fireflies and the moonlight
and the phosphorescent gleam,
Down in swelt'ring Panama.

When a month of toil was over and I'd get my hard-earned pay,
She'd keep just what was needed and the rest she'd put away,
That's the reason I am able to be here a-drinking 'cham . . .'
And a-treating sweet-tongued ladies who for no one care a damn!
Though they never care a damn,
And their love is all a sham,
There's one I'll bet who loves me yet
for what I really am,
Down in swelt'ring Panama . . .

PANAMA.

I have drunk and danced with women till I ache
in ev'ry bone,
And having spent nigh ev'ry cent they've left
me on mine own,
Yet there's a truer maiden in a fairer land I
know,
Who'd stick by me through thick and thin, in
happiness or woe,
Earning little years ago,
When our funds were getting low,
She'd twine her arms around my neck,
and set my heart aglow,
Down in swelt'ring Panama . . .

Now I've squandered all my savings and I've
heard some people say,
That you can't get love on credit round about
the Great White Way,
So I'm going back, God grant it, to the sweetest
girl by far,
Who is waiting for my coming 'neath the
palms of Panama.
Down in swelt'ring Panama,
Where the exiled gringos are,
And all the lot have surely got
their souls as black as tar,
Down in swelt'ring Panama,
'Neath that blazing dome afar,
Where, gleaming bright, hangs low at night
the Southern Cross afar.

THE CALL OF THE SOUTH.

From those peaks which pierce the vastness,
Where the snows commune with silence,
Where the ceaseless hum of Life has failed to reach.
From the wide majestic uplands
And the savage godless jungle,
From the nodding palms which skirt the shelving beach,
Comes a whisper faint and fleeting,
Quick it sets the pulses beating
Of those *gringos*, who have learnt to understand,
'Tis a *something* heart elating,
Like a lover's voice vibrating,
'Tis a luring call from out the Southern Land.

And it ne'er will brook resistance,
'Tis of tense, lifelong persistence,
It has cast o'er us a spell and yield we must,
To its soul uplifting clamour,
To its weird enthralling glamour,
To that feeling strange men call the wanderlust.
Restless sons of ev'ry nation,
Long have known its fascination,
It has drawn them from the farthest ends of earth,
Not the sleek, whom wealth entices,
Nor the scum exiled for vices,
But th' ones who strive for fame—the men of worth.

They are sweating in the denseness,
Of an Ecuadorian forest,
Where fever's deadly strongholds they assail,
Tow'ring mountains know their daring,
You will see their camp-fires flaring
'Long the windings of a bleak Bolivian trail.
Having cast all ties behind 'em
On a Chilian waste you'll find 'em,
Where the solitude eternal turns you dumb,
'Tis not selfish greed enslaving,
But a fierce rebellious craving . . .
'Tis the yearning call of Space which bids you come.

THE CALL OF THE SOUTH.

It is calling, ever calling,
Faintly comes the distant echo,
Of that voice which stirs the blood of those who roam,
For it speaks of morning glory,
Noonday glare, and sunset's gory,
Of livid moon, of stars and velvet dome.
Telling tales of paths untravelled,
Hidden mysteries unravelled,
Of sickness dire, uncared for and alone.
Of graves in unknown places;
Whilst they hark with eager faces;
The mystic South has claimed them for its own!

MY CUBANITA.

There's a little hut I know of in a verdant covered land,
Where the shores are soft caressed by Caribb calm.
And this little hut is standing on a glittering coral strand
'Neath the shelter of a spreading cocoa palm.
The walls are rudely fashioned, for they're made of palma leaves,
The roof admits the tropic sun and rains,
Through the gaping chinks at midnight passes free the cooling breeze,
Whilst th' ruddy dawn the inmost corner stains.

MY CUBANITA.

There's a little girl I know of, whose abode's that
humble shack,
A ruler absolute, great power she wields,
Though her skin is rather dusky and her clothing
somewhat lack,
Yet in truth and purity to none she yields.
A rugged coral mountain, rising from a still
lagoon,
Comprises for this queen a wondrous throne,
With the sun her mighty sceptre—her diadem
the moon,
She reigns o'er stretching land and sea, alone.

When the blazing sun at dawning launches forth
his blist'ring rays,
She bathes her perfect form of dusky hue,
In the cool laguna waters, where the sportive
porpoise plays,
And skimming low, the myriad seabirds mew.
She glides, devoid of effort, from the sun-kissed
coral shore,
To quickly dive to where the white sand
gleams,
And, as she graceful rises to the rippled breast
once more,
A water-nymph, divinely fair, she seems.

MY CUBANITA.

When the piping day is over, and the moon shines cold above
And night is fresh in its virginity,
She twangs her *gitarita* and she sings those songs of love,
As often she has sung them o'er to me.
Across the calm laguna comes a seabird"s plaintive cry,
Full lonely in the absence of its mate,
Her sweet song ends abrutly, from her lips escapes a sigh,
She too is doomed her love's return to wait.

Till the bellbird echoes midnight, and the phosphor is aglow,
She lingers, sadly gazing out at sea,
Towards the far horizon, where the Southern Cross hangs low,
And I know that she is yearning just for me.
She is yearning for the moment when I'll take her in mine arms,
And kiss away those tears which dim her eyes,
Then stay, a fellow victim to that land's seductive charms,
A partner in that earthly paradise.

MY CUBANITA.

She's my dark-eyed Cubanita, daughter of that
Island free,
Whose soil is clothed with waving sugar cane,
A simple child of Nature, yet a goddess fair to
see,
Appointed o'er Arcadia to reign.
Oh! lead me to its portals, let me breath its air
once more,
Let me taste its joys of life, and fruits of love!
With its walls the red horizon, the forest green
its floor,
Its gilded roof the stretching dome above.

THE BUM.

He drifted in on the tide of sin,
Deep in the human slime,
One of the scum, a low-down Bum,
Schooled in the art of crime.
Nothing in sight but a drunkard's grave,
Shunned by the world, alone,
Begging his way howe'er he may,
Down on the Isthmus Zone.

Yet he'd a tale which he told to me
Once in a sober spell,
Reason enough why so rapidly
He trod on the path to hell.
Reason, I said, why he downward sped
With a rush that nought could hold,
Always the same—a woman to blame,
For this is the tale he told.

THE BUM.

Did you hap'd to be on the Isthmus Zone about
the year '05
When that strip of land twixt each ocean strand
was like to a bustling hive,
When the wondrous scheme of a mighty task
was wrought without falt'ring hitch,
And the calloused drove, like demons, strove in
the depths of that world-famed ditch.

If you had then you would have heard them
speak down in Colon Town,
Of the bright career of an engineer who won
for himself renown.
Who, by the strength of his brawn and brain,
towered far above the rest,
Till across that Zone he was widely known as a
sample of Nature's best.

THE BUM.

Tall and straight—with eyes that read thoughts
of the inmost heart.
Meeting the world with erected head, manfully
playing his part.
Picture in thought the man I paint, fresh with
the blush of youth,
Now swear it's a lie! but that man was I, yes, I,
with this face uncouth.

Proud was I in those former days, sought by my
fellow men,
Feeling the glow which is wrought by praise,
lauded by speech and pen,
Winning the smiles of the fairer sex, blessed
with the love of some,
Willing to be what I chose, to me,—a worn-out
no-good Bum.

Unknown to me was the soft caress, the warmth
of a fluttering breast,
The wondrous bliss of that long-drawn kiss, the
joy of the after-rest.
Pure was I in my thoughts and deeds, steeled in
the human strife,
Till the luring shade of a lying jade was thrown
'cross my path in life.

Paint what you will! she was fairer still, fair as
a tropic dawn,
Worthy to vie with the blushing sky, as the
glowing sun's withdrawn.
Yea! and her voice with its velvet tones, soothed
like a soft refrain,
The liquid trill of her laughter still rings through
my sodden brain.

Few were the days from the hour we met till she
was my only thought,
The substance real of my mind's ideal—all that
in life I sought.
On virtue's throne I placed her alone, as only a
lover can,
And to her gave all a girl should crave.—the love
of a clean-cut man.

When Colon bay, at the close of day, mirrored
the tints above,
And the evening breeze, through the palma trees,
sighed for its morning love,
Oft we'd sit by that circling beach, washed by the
Caribb sea,
How my heart would beat with a rapture sweet,
as she told of her love for me.

Then the nascent moon, as a cescent, soon would
rise from her virgin bower,
And a thousand stars, each a blazing Mars, their
beams on the night would shower,
Whilst hand in hand 'long that coral strand,
where the snow-capped breakers curled,
We'd wander slow, with our hearts aglow, alone
in a lovers' world.

My God! How I schemed, and worked and
dreamed of the joy that would soon be mine,
My only thought was the goal I sought, a Home,
with its love divine,
That haven sweet of a perfect peace, aloof from
the worldly strife,
Where the radiant morn, of a love new-born,
would last till the end of life.

THE BUM.

'Twas but a week from that longed-for day when
she would receive my name,
Would it e'er pass by? All impatient I, the prize
I had won, to claim,
And we sat that night from the crowd apart, in a
ballroom's cool retreat,
'Neath a palma's shade, whilst the *banda*[1] played,
a waltz Strauss, low and sweet.

One which seems to speak of dreams, the heart's
lone space to fill,
Though years have flown and hard I've grown,
that music haunts me still.
Back through the years it comes to me, till
quick my pulses leap,
Its sweet refrain I hear again in the void of my
drunken sleep.

[1] Band

We'd sat awhile in a blissful dream, screened
from the curious glance,
When another came, from my side to claim my
love for a promised dance,
With a whispered word, which alone I heard,
she rose from our sheltered seat,
And with true charm, on her partner's arm, was
borne to the music's beat.

As they passed from view in the laughing throng
I sought once again that seat,
And gazing down on the leaf-strewn ground lay
a letter, 'twixt my feet.
Which first surprised, for I realized the script of
my promised wife,
Then sent a pain through my whirling brain, like
the thrust of a keen-edged knife.

For the one addressed was a man I'd known,
famed as a poisonous weed,
A useless lot, a drunken sot, worm of the lowest
breed.
One who would, if the price was good, barter
his closest friend,
Whose life, depraved, oft victims craved would
meet with a speedy end.

Have you ever looked on a man condemned, as
he stands 'neath the gallows tree,
And for his crime in a moment's time must
plunge to eternity?
Have you heard that cry, as he's pinned to die,
which comes from his anguished soul?
That shriek which tells of the hell of hells, as he
drops through the gaping hole?

If you have then you can imagine me, as I read
that letter o'er,
Which plainly showed that my bride-to-be the
heart of a harpy bore,
For wrote she not that her love was his whilst
clearly describing how,
I'd take the blame of her secret shame with that
of my marriage vow.

I was the tool, the poor damned fool, she'd use
as a social shield,
Doomed to partake for appearance's sake of
fruits which her sin would yield,
I, who had learned the truth to seek, the false-
hood to despise,
Would pass this life with a faithless wife, steeped
in the foulest lies.

THE BUM.

Crazed with grief from the curséd place into the night I fled,
Need the rest be told? In my haggard face you'll read what I've left unsaid.
With women and liquor, cards and dice trying to numb the pain,
Till at last I fell to the depths of hell, never to rise again.

* * * * *

That was the tale in a plaintive wail he told to my great surprise,
Whilst to me it seemed that his lost soul gleamed out from his bloodshot eyes.
Then the light did fade from their watery depths, his feverish lips were dumb,
And he stood once more, by Death's dark door, a nameless, low-down Bum.

VALPARAISO BAY.

When the virgin morn awakens, and its face
aflame with blushes
Arises from the fragrant prairie bed,
Fleeting elfins of the dawning tear aside night's
darkened awning
To reveal fair Nature's paintings overhead.
Soon from mountain, crest and valley, smiling
vineyard, sullen pampa,
The last intrepid shadows steal away,
Or, paling, quick surrender when the sun in won-
drous splendour
Climbs o'er those heights of Valparaiso Bay.

Soon the city is astirring, from each narrow
crooked *calle*[1]
Ascends the morning vendor's 'cadent call,
Bells for early Matins ringing, deep voiced
fishers gayly singing
As they homeward row with their abundant
haul.
In the sunlit space o'erspreading . . . turned to
Bedlam by their screaming,
Large countless flocks of *gaviotas* play,
Sweeping downwards . . . upwards twirling . .
like a shower of snowflakes whirling
O'er the mirrowed depths of Valparaiso Bay.

[1] Street

VALPARAISO BAY.

In the dazzling glare of noon-day man and beast
abstain from toiling,
Hungry seabirds cease awhile their warfare
shrill,
All are silently reposing . . . through a short
siesta[2] dozing,
Whilst the breathless land is lying deathly still.
Nothing stirs from rising *cerro*[3] to the farthest
off-shore whaler,
(Old gnarléd warrior proved in many a fray),
Overcome Pacific's rancour . . . swaying peace-
fully at anchor,
To the rythmic swell of Valparaiso Bay.

[2] Noonday sleep
[3] Hill

But the scene attains perfection when the swelt'ring day is closing,
E're the deeper shades are cast by coming night,
Lofty spires so stately rearing . . . tow'ring hill and cliff appearing
Engulfed in flames beneath the shimmering light.
Whilst the final *rayos*[4] . . . seeming like a huge reflector beaming . . .
Among the clouds and distant snowpeaks play,
Then descending, fiercely glowing, send a crimson stream wide flowing
Across the breast of Valparaiso Bay.

[4] Rays

VALPARAISO BAY.

Grey, the veil of night spreads over, driving from
the verdant landscape,
The last lone remnants of the afterglow,
Glided spires and purple *cerros* are bedecked
with ghostly raiment,
And, with the passing moments, fainter grow.
Dim are seen the whitened tombstones marking
where the exiled children
Of a mighty Mother Country far away,
Having made her name undying, in God's loving
care are lying
On those heights o'erlooking Valparaiso Bay.

VALPARAISO BAY.

Soon the sentinels of darkness glimmer in the stretching vastness,
Clear the city lights, back through the night, reply,
Heaven's canopy is teeming. . . with a million starlets gleaming,
And the Southern Cross, afire, is hung on high,
Crowds in *plazas*[5] cool are straying, list'ning to the *bandas*[6] playing,
Departed now the stifling heat of day,
Whilst the true artistic luna changes to a bright laguna
The calm expanse of Valparaiso Bay.

[5] City squares
[6] Bands

VALPARAISO BAY.

Through the trackless tropic jungle, on the bleak
Magellan pampas,
From plains to where the snow eternal lies,
In those lands by nature favoured, I have fought
and loved and laboured,
With the lowly herded . . . feasted with the
high.
But, although I aimless wander. . . free as air
with nought to bind me,
There's one lovely spot where gladly I would
stay,
And I pray that—ceased my roaming—I may
pass life's tranquil gloaming
By the peaceful shores of Valparaiso Bay.

THE SOUTHLAND.

A wooer, in love with Creation,
Adrift from the day of my birth,
Allegiance I give to no nation,
The country I claim is the Earth.
From swamps where the Chagres is flowing,
Through jungles where fevers abound,
To wastes, where bleak blizzards are blowing,
The mark of my footprint is found.

Perhaps you have never heard spoken
The name of the land that I mean,
The heart of its wilds is unbroken
The best of its beauties unseen.
There, mountains sheer upwards are tow'ring,
To pass in the dimness from sight,
Whilst jungles, of vastness o'erpow'ring,
Are clothed in the blackness of night.

Each morn is a curtain combining
All works of God's wonderful loom,
Rare tints of the rainbow entwining
With those of a garden in bloom.
At e'ven each mountain peak hoary
With rivers of gold is aflood,
As the sun, still arrayed in its glory,
Sinks down in an ocean of blood.

Then stars in their myriads teeming,
Appear on the blackboard of night,
Fair luna, aroused from her dreaming,
Bathes earth with a virginal light.
Dark jungles and forest awaken
From coma of sweltering day,
As widely their slumbers are shaken
By prowling brutes seeking their prey.

Pacific is endlessly crooning
  Its chant to the coral-bound strand,
Nature forever is tuning
  The strings of a wonderful band.
Each with the other full blending
  Whilst chorus on chorus is piled,
Till loud to the skies is ascending
  A rapturous song of the Wild.

That is the land, when you leave it
  You swear 'tis a final good-bye!
But somehow you fail to achieve it,
  You cannot, however you try.
For though it breeds fevers that rot you,
  And offers but hardships and pain,
Yet the Lure of the Tropics has 'got' you,
  You'll return to the Southland again.

THE GRINGO'S LAMENT.

Take me away from the city gay, with its endless rush and roar,
Fair to the eye of the passer-by, cankering at its core,
God! How I hate these men innate, with manliness erased,
Their fitting mates but fashion plates, with the human form effaced.

Take me away from the Great White Way, where teeming millions tread,
Far from the sound of the Underground, and the whirl of the Overhead.
Far from the taint of that clouded view, and narrow mind begat
By the soulless, spineless, humdrum life of a modern up-town flat.

THE GRINGO'S LAMENT.

Give me a hut by a coral strand, where the palms
in clusters grow,
A tropic night, wtih the stars alight and the
phosphor gleam aglow,
The murmur low of the lapping waves, the song
of the surging swell,
And bellbirds weird in a neighbouring grove,
chiming their midnight knell.

What do I care for the swagger fare of a high-
toned restaurant,
Or dinners glum where I listen dumb to a chat-
tering debutante,
Tired I am of the taste of 'cham'—and the per-
fumed fat cigar,
Of lolling around, like a king uncrowned, in a
high-priced motorcar.

THE GRINGO'S LAMENT.

Send me back o'er a mountain track, from dawn till the day is done,
Where the lone reply to your hunger's cry is the bark of a trusty gun.
Cast me adrift where the sandhills shift to the play of a pampa breeze,
With a thirst to raise, and a trail to blaze, and a bronco twixt my knees.

Ever I yearn for a quick return to that land of the sunsets red,
Where the amber dawn, as a startled fawn, leaps from its prairie bed,
The noonday glare I'll gladly bear, and, when the night lies down,
Held to its breast I'll peaceful rest away from New York Town.

WOMAN.

A mixture strange of right and wrong,
Of frowns and laughter, tears and song,
Of ways which do and don't belong
To the meek or the worldly wise;
Of fear . . . yet brave in facing pain,
Of humble mien, yet high disdain,
Of lofty thoughts and sordid gain,
Of truth and petty lies.

She'll sink from sight in choking slime,
Or pass from view to heights sublime,
Yet, lowly born, will seldom climb
But stay where she began;
With clouded brain and blinded eyes
From out the dust she fails to rise,
Ambition lacking, never tries
To keep abreast with man.

WOMAN.

Those lips, which innocently prate,
And whisper words, which heavens create,
Can spit forth curses filled with hate,
    Which turn one's marrow cold;
Those breasts, which God has deigned to bless,
Which bloom beneath a child's caress,
Can overflow with wantonness,
    The darkest secrets hold.

Soft hands, which soothe the sick to sleep,
She in revengeful blood may steep,
They'll turn to claws as swift she'll leap
    To aid her mate's defence;
And in the depths of those bright eyes,
Where men have oft found paradise,
The flame of scorn can quick arise
    Or flourish cute pretense.

WOMAN.

Though sometimes she by man is bought,
His money gone . . . her mission wrought,
She'll cast him off without a thought,
    As she would do her glove;
Yea! though she stoops her soul to sell,
Yet will her heart in freedom dwell,
With smiling face she'll go through hell,
    And give her life for love.

Contempt and worship both she breeds,
Desire for good and evil feeds,
And contradicts her words and deeds,
    A thousand different ways;
A problem which has ne'er been solved,
Though Destinies are oft involved,
She'll stay a mystery unsolved
    Until the end of days.

THE PET.

You'll see him o' nights 'neath the spluttering lights
Of a blazoned booze saloon,
Striking with ease from the ivory keys
A popular rag-time tune;
Shouting the lines of a limerick song,
One of a sulphurous brand,
Turning again to the haunting refrain
Of a waltz, or an opera grand.

Meeting the curse or badgering terse
With nought but a shamefaced grin,
Trying his best, with obnoxious jest,
A smile from his hearers to win;
A branded Bum, the worthy chum
Of a painted lynx-eyed dame,
A follower shrewd of that cankerous brood,
Living on women's shame.

THE PET.

You ne'er would think that this low-down 'gink'
Was the son of an honoured dad,
The favorite child of a mother mild,
A 'varsity undergrad;
Who, through his name, could rightly claim
Descent from a noble breed,
And wrested praise, in bye-gone days,
From men of whom we read.

Who won the hand of a woman true,
Chosen 'fore other men,
A model fair of that beauty rare,
Pictured by artists' pen;
Who gave him all that a man may ask,
Purity, Truth and Love,
To find it used, besmirched and cast
Aside, like a worn-out glove.

And he, who knew the soft caress
The kiss of a virgin maid,
Now stoops to tend to the whims and ways
Of a heartless, soulless jade.
He, who ate with a millionaire,
And drank with a belted peer,
Hired to amuse, all who may choose,
To call for a ten-cent beer.

Yet pity him not, he's a drunken sot,
Dead to the sense of shame;
Fallen as low as man can go,
And only himself to blame.
Braggart and bully, coward and cur,
Imp of the blackest jet,
That's him who's known on the Ithmus zone
As the Red Light District Pet.

THE EXILED GRINGO.

To be sung to the tune of The Village Blacksmith

Under a spreading banyan tree
The Exiled Gringo sits,
Around his burning aching head
A small mosquito flits
And never for a moment brief
Its sordid humming quits.

The gringo's hair is crisp and short,
His skin a sickly tan,
His brow is wet with fever's sweat,
He works whene'er he can,
And studies each and ev'ry face
For he trusts not any man.

THE EXILED GRINGO.

Week in, week out, from morn 'till night,
The fever racks his frame,
The greenhorns, coming out from home
Are young and tender game.
Malaria vile, or Yellow Jack
Their bodies quickly claim.

He goes on Sunday to the town
And gets among the boys,
He watches others drink and bet,
He hears a harpy's voice,
Singing in days gone bye,
If he but had his choice.
It sounds to him like someone dear
Singing in days gone bye,
He wipes, with palsied, shaking hand,
A tear-drop from his eye.

THE EXILED GRINGO.

Working, drinking, borrowing,
Onward through life he goes,
Each week-end sees his *plata*[1] drawn
Each evening quick it flows,
Striving always, nothing gained
Till death his eyelids close.

[1] Money (silver)

MEMORIES.

Dear old pal, do you remember when we roamed
the Southland over
From blazing Panama down to the Horn?
On the brink of manhood verging, with the red
blood through us surging,
'Long the pathways of adventure were we
borne.
Then we knew no days of sorrow, thoughtless
ever of the morrow,
We wandered on where fickle fortune led,
Now our day grows quickly dimmer, and life's
spark is but a glimmer;
Yet, pal of mine, those mem'ries are not dead.

MEMORIES.

In my fancy we are sweating once again by Chagres river,
Where we pierced the festooned jungle through and through,
Or we're tramping 'cross the moorlands of that bleak, storm-swept Magellan,
Where the blizzards of Antarctic fiercely blew.
Comes to mind the arid pampa where we treked, athirst and weary,
Beneath the glare of that eternal sun.
And by Guaya, gently flowing, I can see our camp-fires glowing
As we smoked a fragrant pipe when day was done.

MEMORIES.

Do you ever think, old comrade, of those sun-
baked dusty cities,
Of narrowed streets wherein strange odours
dwell,
Of plazas cool at ev'ning, when the blaring bands
were playing,
And nightly 'jags' when fairly raised we hell.
Those were times when nothing mattered, joys
and hardships shared together,
Thoughts of love, of sweet romance and deadly
strife,
Though with Fate we oftimes sported, and grim
Death by us was courted,
Yet, comrade mine, we drank the wine of Life!

And those strange enchanted islands, with the ripened fruit in plenty,
Where each of us ensnared a dusky queen,
The hours of fervent rapture, and of *dolce far niente*[1].
Those nights of dazzling stars and silver sheen.
O'er the surf-drenched reefs of coral where the oily swell is surging,
A scented breeze is straying to and fro,
And it softly keeps repeating to the combers shoreward fleeting,
Those heart-enthralling tales of long ago.

[1] Sweet idleness

Now, descending to the valley where deep shadows are appearing,
The peaks of youth and strength seem far away,
Still, in my mind's reflection, I can see them stately rearing,
It seems as if we'd scaled them yesterday.
But our journey's almost ended; soon, when Death's dark veil is rended,
Together we will face the Great High Boss,
So, 'ere leave of earth is taken, here's to friendship ne'er forsaken!
Adiós, my loyal comrade . . . adiós.

THE GRINGO'S HOMECOMING.

Down in swelt'ring Panama, up in freezing Bogota,
'Long the fevered Spanish Mainland, from the Isthmus to Pará,
On an Ecuadorian pampa, in a hot Peruvian town,
From the beach of Valparaiso 'till the stormy Horn you round,
You will find the wand'ring *gringo*, so he's called in West Coast lingo,
A son of England or the U. S. A.,
Who, from varied circumstances, freedom's will, or lack of chances,
Or from causes best unknown, is 'out' to stay.

THE GRINGO'S HOMECOMING.

Born of high or lowly station, board or college
education,
Speaking with a Yankee twang or Oxford
drawl,
Scotsman, Irish, Londoner—Eastern, Western,
Southerner,
Of ev'ry different creed, yet *gringos* all.

Strong in youth, in years declining, married, sin-
gle, concubining,
Trading, banking, mining, planting for his pay,
In a sultry seaport baking, on a snow-clad
mountain shaking,
From the breaking of the dawn 'till close of
day.

THE GRINGO'S HOMECOMING.

Leaving home with great ambitions, in his mind the youthful visions
Of a Promised Land, where milk and honey flow,
Soon he finds that earning money is distinct to sucking honey,
And the milk he drinks is from the cup of woe.

Years of working to his credit he will find the balance debit,
Not a cent to show for weary hours of sweat,
While, as each year adds another to his toiling, he'll discover
That instead of saving up he's deep in debt.

And his cherished hopes now vanished, he considers that he's banished,
He fears to face his old companions' scorn,
Past advice of others spurning, he is fearful of returning
As a failure to the land where he was born.

Yet he risks his soul's perdition, boasting of his high position,
To his parents, who believe it, ev'ry word,
While they tell his friends about it, who ne'er think to even doubt it,
Wondrous stories of that Promised Land they've heard.

THE GRINGO'S HOMECOMING.

On the years so fleeting roll, while Death's angel
claims its toll,
Never will be see his mother's face again,
What tears of grief he shed, for she passed away,
he read,
Calling for that absent wanderer in vain.

Enters then that homesick yearning, which de-
cides him on returning,
To labour in his native land once more,
Scraping all he has together, and with heart
light as a feather,
He watches fade from sight that foreign shore.

THE GRINGO'S HOMECOMING.

To his eyes the cliffs of Dover, or the Statue,
towering over,
Are by far the dearest, fairest scenes on earth,
Years of exile left behind him, tears of joy rise
up to blind him,
As he gazes on the country of his birth.

But the faintest tinge of sadness slightly clouds
his new-found gladness,
As the steamer to the crowded dock makes
fast,
Not a friend is there to meet him, no bright smil-
ing face to greet him,
Not a comrade of the half-forgotten past.

And he visits former scenes, visions of his many
dreams,
In eagerness fond greetings to exchange,
Though old places are the same, yet no comrade
speaks his name,
Each face he sees, quick passing by, is strange.

Friends, relations, dead or scattered, all the past
illusions shattered,
Loneliness with all its terror fills his breast,
All in life that's worth bereft him, he decides
with what is left him
To buy an outbound ticket for the West.

THE GRINGO'S HOMECOMING.

No goodbyes, nor fond leavetaking, with his
heart within nigh breaking,
He gazes at the fast receding shore,
No ambitions now to flame him, well he knows
till Death doth claim him
He'll be an exiled **gringo** evermore.

SELECTIONS FROM BALLADS OF A GRINGO

HOMESICK

When you wake up at dawn with a weight on your chest
And you gaze to the East though your trail it lies West,
When your appetite's gone and you curse without zest,—
You're homesick, poor *gringo*, you're homesick.

MANANA

(To-morrow)

In those little Repulics down south of the Zone,
Where each of an army of *Generals* can boast,
Where each waits a pick of the Treasury bone,
And a President rules for a week at the most,
From the moment the sun tips the high standing palm,
And the first note is chirped by the earliest bird,
'Till the hour when the *luna* reigns silent and
You hear e'er repeated one *spigetti*[1] word . . .
Mañana.

[1]Word used to signify anything native.

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